

A New Series - - *Psalm 39:4 Lord, make me know my end and what is the extent of my days; Let me know how transient I am.*

This is a future-oriented book helping us prepare for the end and to live with the end in mind. To learn in Christ how to “wait well” on the return of Jesus. The church in Thessalonica was a model, exemplary church in a wicked city. They are doing well, but must continue to grow in faith, hope, and love to prevent becoming sluggish, complacent, and losing their passion for their purpose and calling.

“The way we see the future sculpts the present” (E. Peterson).

1. Evangelism Started the Church: (See Acts 17:1-9)

- a. Thessalonica: Paul, Silas, and Timothy go into the city, into the synagogue, and preach the Gospel. It’s not that complex: reasoned, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and that Jesus was this Christ. A large number of God-fearing Greeks, some of the Jews, and a number of the leading women become converts.
- b. Thessalonica was the most populous and capital city of Macedonia - free and pluralistic - enjoyed much favor from Rome
- c. “To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”
 - i. A divine union, for which Paul is grateful to God
 - ii. Where is the Spirit? (v.5, v. 6)
 1. In power and in the Holy Spirit - something dramatic and divine happened
 2. Received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit
 3. So, in a short time, God moved, and a great impact was made...
 4. “Whenever Paul went, they started a riot; Me? They serve tea”

2. Encouragement Sustained the Church:

- a. Read it to all! (5:27) *the earliest witness and look into what a Christian community looked like! (AD 50-51) He loves them - always on my mind - all of them always, constantly. Pervasive impact and connection; ongoing, sincere*
- b. How uplifting and encouraging to be thought of and prayed for by credible, godly people; praise from the praiseworthy.
- c. When you praise someone’s strengths, their weaknesses improve
- d. Lincoln: I had one good friend who believed in me, and I did not want to let him down
- e. **Purpose:** So, Paul writes to them for the following reasons:
 - i. Edify their Faith: strengthen and encourage these new believers in the faith;

- ii. Increase their Trust: to answer false accusations about Paul and his ministry, credibility (2:1-12)
- iii. Comfort their Hearts: explain the Christian dead would participate in the second coming of Christ;
- iv. Teach them the Way: to warn the Christians against pagan immorality; 4:4
- v. Remind them to learn: the church members to honor and follow their spiritual leaders; 5:12-13;
- vi. Energize their Work: and to warn church members who had given up their jobs and were idle because they thought Christ would return soon 2:9
- f. The Kind of People They Were: they longed to be with them . . . (2:16-20;3:9-11)

3. **Evidence Strengthened the Church:** *Constantly bearing in mind:* remembering before our God and Father..

- a. Timothy went to visit them and reported back to Paul and Silas their condition
- b. Three marks of a *chosen, credible, and impactful witness for Christ*:
- c. Yours: they possessed and owned these qualities: are evidence of God's choosing and exemplary for God's people (qualities to have and to cultivate).
Triad of Christian character: Colossians 1:4-5; Romans 5:1-5; Gal. 5:5-6; Eph. 4:2 -
 - i. Your work of faith: **A working faith** -
 - 1. A faith that works; Faith alone, but not a faith that remains alone
 - 2. Faith is a gift, but a transforming gift . . believe (John 6:29; Hebrews 11:6)
 - 3. Trust that exercises itself in actions (James 2:14-26; Matt. 5:16)
 - 4. We are His workmanship . . created in Christ Jesus for good works; be careful to engage in good deeds . .
 - ii. Your labor of love: **A laboring love**: have you ever tried 1 Cor. 13?
 - 1. Willing self-sacrifice for the benefit of another; whether or not they deserve it or reciprocate - this is so difficult! Tests and shapes us
 - 2. 2 Cor. 5: His love compels us . . we cannot sit on the sidelines
 - 3. We are selfish! By nature, we shrink back from a love like the good Samaritan
 - iii. Your steadfastness of hope: **An enduring hope**: Romans 5
 - 1. What do you believe about the future? Fear, dread, uncertainty?
 - 2. A living and certain future hope, based on the resurrection of Jesus
 - 3. The Cross and Resurrection infuse our life with meaning and hope
 - 4. We look back, we look around, and we look forward
 - 5. He gives them an enduring hope by reminding them of the TRUTH - Reasons based on the Gospel- a living hope! Romans 8:32
 - iv. An interesting feature of this book: Each chapter ends with a reference to the second coming of Christ to strengthen and infuse their hope and resolve by the truth: The risen Lord will return, implications and impacts:

1. 1:10: salvation - "to wait for His Son from heaven . . . who rescues us from the wrath to come"
2. 2:19-20: source of joy - "our joy, hope, crown is you in the presence of our Lord at His coming"
3. 3:13: stability - "establish your heart without blame in holiness at the coming of our Lord Jesus"
4. 4:18: sorrow - "the Lord himself will descend from heaven . . . we shall always be with the Lord"
5. 5:23 sanctification - "the God of peace will sanctify you entirely, and may your spirit, soul, and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass"

What does the evidence prove? Brethren, beloved by God . . . He first loved us His choice of you (Adoption, absolute security)

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN? See verse 5: We came to you; sudden impact. The Gospel came to the Thessalonians through genuine witnesses - and then THEY became genuine witnesses; it did something to them...God did this!!

- It is the genuine Gospel through God's trusted servants that does His genuine work
- A delivered message: word only... they came and delivered the message . . .
- A divine message: power, Holy Spirit; sacred and supernatural...
- A demonstrated message: they were acting out the Gospel; confirmed by the way they lived their lives. The grace which saves also transforms.

Our Gospel did not come in word only . . . not just a verbal message; not just information; not just content, but divine content . . . which saves, moves, and inspires - Divine Truth; Saving and Moving Truth - that feeds the soul . . . (Psalm 19)

- But in Power
- In the Holy Spirit - it is a divine supernatural word... message... book
- With full conviction...a belief is something I hold; a conviction is something which holds me

"When Christ returns in power and glory, there will be no need for faith or hope. There will only be love, since the reality will be evident and fully realized for everyone to see." (M. Horton)

"Surely one reason for Paul's success centers on his churches having made as big an impression on Paul as he made on them" (The feelings are mutual - reciprocal)